



THE ULTIMATE Guide to Through-Channel Marketing Automation Platforms





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INTRODUCTION

We designed this guide to help companies considering a new TCMA platform understand the market and the maturity of various solutions. It will create a foundation for a thoughtful evaluation of platform capabilities and their fit within your channel.

StructuredWeb



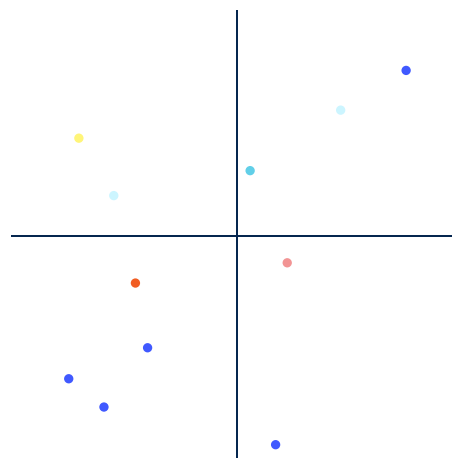


Marketing Automation Platforms

The evolution of the TCMA market parallels mainstream marketing automation platforms

THE EARLY 2000'S

Before we dive into TCMA, let's first look at how the MAP market evolved. In the early 2000s, MarTech solutions began to appear, but no integrated platforms were available, and companies cobbled together solutions from various vendors to meet their unique marketing automation needs.



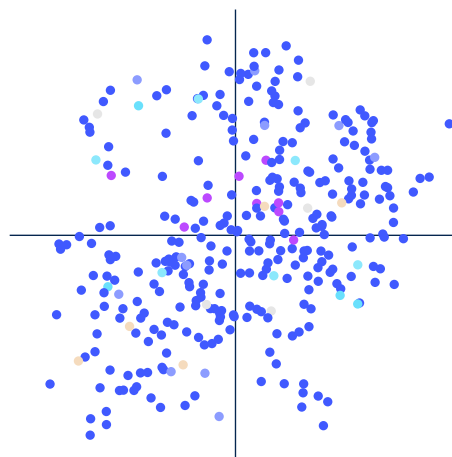
**Number of MarTech Solutions
Available in Early 2000s**

MID-2000S

In the mid-2000s, marketing automation platforms like HubSpot, Marketo, and Eloqua began to emerge. These platforms had significant differences in capabilities. HubSpot, for example, focused on the website (CTAs, landing pages, search, analytics, etc.), whereas Marketo focused on email campaigns.

2010'S

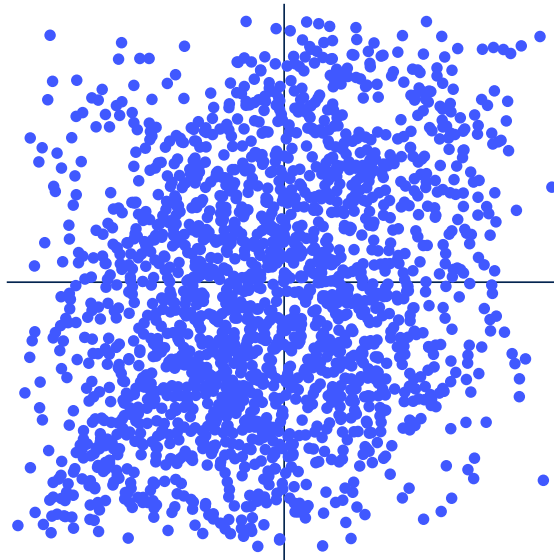
The number of solutions in the market by the next decade numbered hundreds. By 2010 companies were concerned about the number of disparate solutions integrated into their marketing stack, and little did they know that this was about to accelerate. Over the next decade, the number of MarTech solutions grew over 50x.



**Number of MarTech Solutions
Available by 2010**

TODAY

Thousands of MarTech solutions have flooded the market. Currently, almost ten thousand MarTech solutions are available, according to MarTech guru Scott Brinker, and the average enterprise uses roughly 90 tools.



**Today almost 10,000 MarTech
Solutions are Available**

The leading marketing automation platforms have standardized around a core set of features, and the focus has shifted to the user experience and building APIs to enable customers to integrate niche solutions.



A common customer remark on this market goes something like this:

“All the platforms seem capable of meeting our needs, but this one feels like it is made for someone like me.”

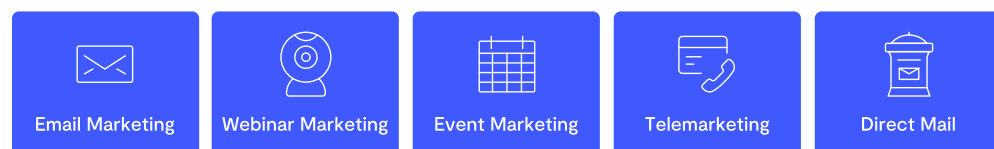


How Does TCMA Differ From Mainstream MAP

The tactics of TCMA platforms differ from mainstream MAP in their support of marketing by third parties (distributors, partners, dealers, retailers, etc.). The platforms also embrace sales tactics typically not found in the broader marketing automation market (i.e., co-branding, content syndication, etc.). Some of these differences are due to the size of the companies doing the marketing; some are unique to channel marketing, while others are associated with the blurred line between sales and marketing in the channel.

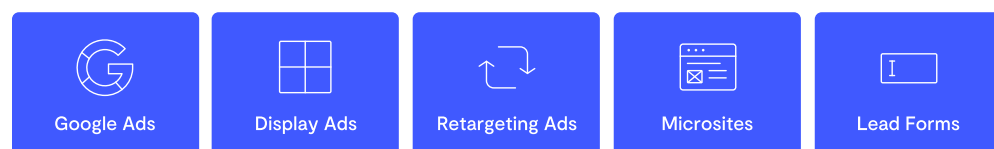
With leading TCMA solutions, it is not unusual to see cobranding, digital advertising, microsites, and social syndication as standard tactics. TCMA platforms also support co-branding of content and campaign capabilities supporting prepackaged events such as webinars and lunch and learns. There is also less demand to integrate with CRMs and more need to integrate with PRMs. The core platform stack is finite, but the market is less mature.

MARKETING TOOLS



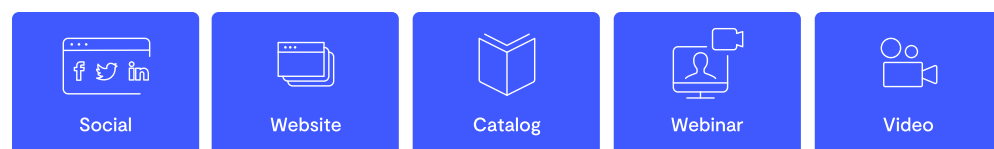
Marketing Tools
Robust digital and traditional marketing tools

DIGITAL ADVERTISING



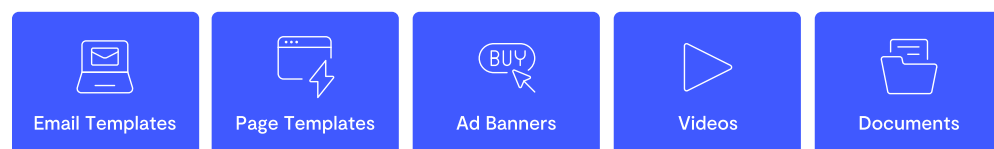
Digital Advertising
Integrated digital advertising with custom landing pages

CONTENT SYNDICATION



Content Syndication
Easy activation, multi-format syndication

CUSTOMIZABLE ASSETS



Customizable Assets
Editable, cobrandable marketing and sales assets



TCMA Platform Maturity

As mentioned earlier, the TCMA market evolved in parallel to mainstream MAP. Unfortunately, there aren't as many analysts covering the TCMA market as the MAP market, so customers need to do their due diligence. The lack of analyst coverage makes it harder to separate the leading solutions from the other players in the market. Like any market, TCMA has market upstarts, laggards, and leaders.

UPSTARTS

Upstarts are innovative companies that serve unique market niches. Many of these companies originate in the broader MarTech world and are repurposed for channel usage. Upstarts have a narrow focus and quickly find customers of channel technology prefer a more comprehensive platform approach. Upstarts also are usually not built to be integrated, which limits their ability to stand alone. Upstarts either add platform features, get acquired, or fail.

The market downturn that began in the fall of 2022 has significantly decreased available funding for TCMA upstarts, so beware! These companies need funding or integration; the market has repeatedly proven this.

LAGGARDS

Immature platforms emerge when underfunded upstarts start to develop features or channel infrastructure. They also occur due to consolidation and neglect.

There are four types of Laggards:

Adolescents	Adolescents are Upstarts that have chosen the path of adding channel platform features. We call these companies Adolescents because they eventually grow into market leaders or become a Cobble.
Cobbles	Cobbles are companies focused on adding features that don't put enough attention into the infrastructure and/or user experience. The result is a loosely coupled platform with a poor user experience that doesn't support multi-tactic campaigns.

Primitives

Primitives are companies that entered the market early, slowly built platform infrastructure, and lag behind the market in features and innovation. These companies usually have a small number of anchor customers who are enough to pay the bills but need more to fund the features that would drive growth.

Lateral Movers

Lateral Movers are companies that exist in the broader channel software market that add marketing automation to expand their market presence. The marketing automation offerings of Lateral Movers are usually very shallow and are often the result of acquiring a Primitive.

DIFFERENTIATING A LAGGARD FROM A LEADER

All Laggards, except Lateral Movers, must catch up in channel infrastructure. The infrastructure gap isn't always evident in the pre-sale process, so it is essential to ask the right questions. Laggards also have feature gaps, except for a Cobble that has tactics but lacks integration.



Other areas where Laggards frequently need to catch up are onboarding and partner support, preparing marketing and content, and analytics to help the vendor understand engagement.

Regardless of the type of Laggard, these companies usually disappoint customers due to poor channel adoption.





Market Leaders

To be a market leader a TCMA platform must have the infrastructure to support a sophisticated channel, the core set of marketing tactics expected by vendors and channel partners, sophisticated campaign capabilities, and partner onboarding and success integrated into its DNA.



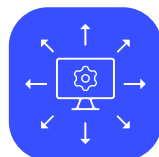
CHANNEL INFRASTRUCTURE

An advanced TCMA platform must be able to exist in a sophisticated channel ecosystem that may include multiple levels of distributors, wholesalers, and partners. The breadth and depth of the channel, particularly for tech companies, continues to expand, and supporting software needs to embrace this expansion.



PERSONALIZATION

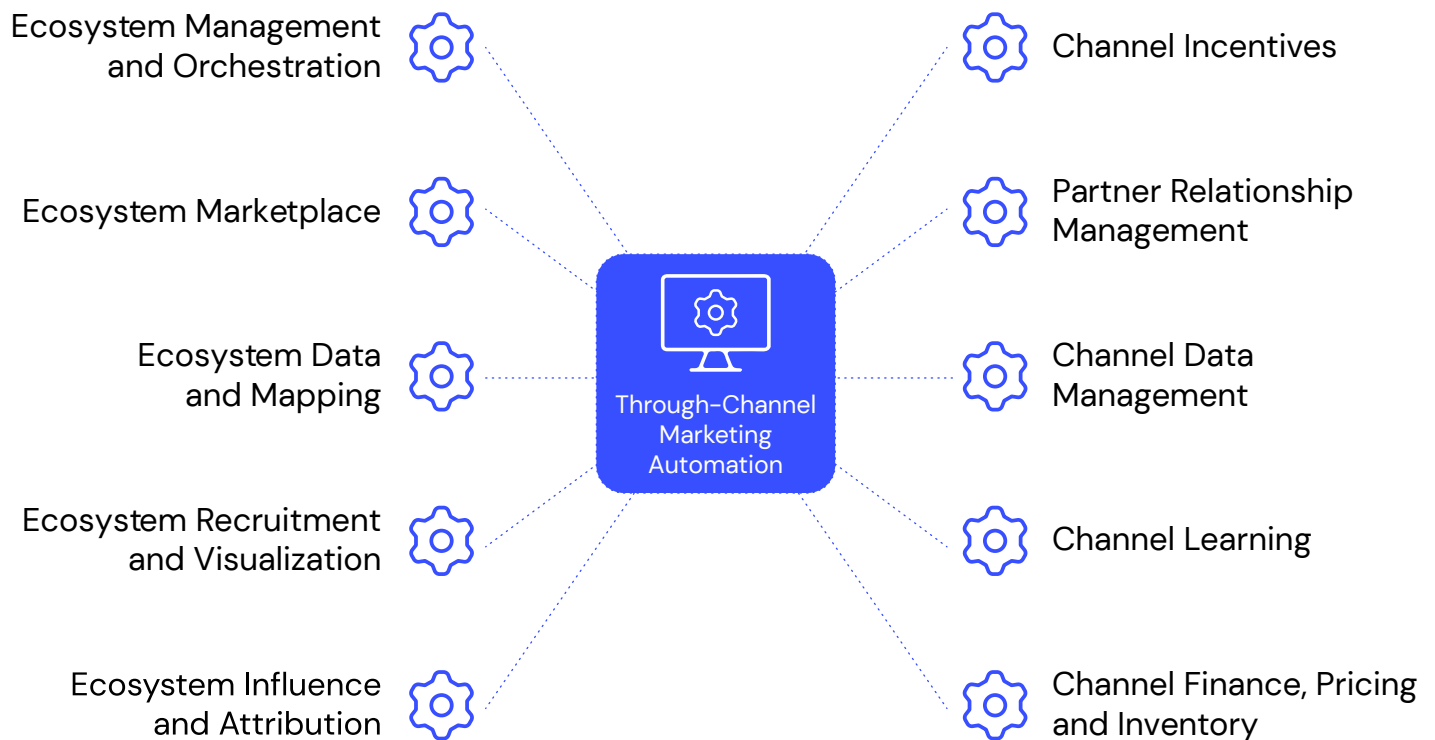
Channel partners have different capabilities and needs, and what they need at any given time can change. The platform must be adaptable to the user today and as they evolve. By understanding who the partner is, where they are logging in from, and what they are interested in doing, the platform can present the user with a custom experience such as displaying in their language and providing a custom journey on first time login. Personalization enables the platform to provide a unique experience, which increases adoption, engagement, and retention.



INTEGRATION

An advanced TCMA must integrate with other channel management software to form a complete channel stack, and it requires APIs for this integration. Examples of integrations include PRM, MDF, Enablement, and Incentives.

An advanced TCMA must integrate with other channel management software to form a complete channel stack:



CORE MARKETING TACTICS

Like the broader marketing automation market, as the TCMA market matured, a core set of marketing tactics appeared. These are the tactics most often requested by channel partners.

Not only must these capabilities be present, but they must also be easy to set up and utilize. Setting up programs and assets is a crucial differentiator between leaders and laggards. Most leaders enable customers to execute marketing tactics without the intervention of the platform provider, whereas laggards require the platform provider's involvement in configuration.

The market leaders all offer this set of core marketing tactics which includes:

Marketing Tools

Robust digital and traditional marketing tools



Email Marketing



Webinar Marketing



Event Marketing



Telemarketing



Direct Mail

Digital Advertising

Integrated digital advertising with custom landing pages



Google Ads



Display Ads



Retargeting Ads



Microsites



Lead Forms

Content Syndication

Easy activation, multi-format syndication



Social



Website



Catalog



Webinar



Video

Customizable Assets

Editable, cobrandable marketing and sales assets



Email Templates



Page Templates



Ad Banners



Videos



Documents

It is important to note that not all editing environments are the same, some create a painful user experience while others delight. Pay close attention to the effort required for vendors to edit content or partners to personalize it. Look for features like drag and drop editing that make it easier for vendors and partners to modify and produce marketing.



GLOBALIZATION

Globalization refers to adapting the TCMA platform to meet a global audience's cultural, linguistic, and technical requirements. Globalization involves ensuring that the software can be used effectively and appropriately by users in different regions around the world.

If you're a global company, you must consider the language differences in the countries where you operate. At a minimum, you'll need to support twenty-plus languages, and some sophisticated platforms support nearly one hundred and twenty-five different language variations.



SOPHISTICATED CAMPAIGN CAPABILITIES

Another way channel marketing parallels the mainstream MAP market is in campaign capabilities. The MAP market learned early on that the ability to integrate multiple tactics into campaigns was essential to support more sophisticated marketing. For example, the need for integrated marketing tactics is evident when promoting marketing events.

When a company does an event (i.e., webinar, lunch and learn, etc.), it needs to promote the event before it occurs, provide a method for interested parties to register for the event, remind registrants as the event approaches, and thank them for their participation after the event. That describes the messaging. Logistics are also related to what occurs at the event and who participates, which must also be coordinated. This type of event requires comprehensive coordination of many different marketing tactics.



SYNDICATION

Syndications enable vendors to create marketing and automate the distribution and usage by channel partners. Syndication first appeared in the channel with social syndication, where posts were written by the vendor, automatically personalized to the partner, and posted under the partner's social handle.

The use of syndication by TCMA's has now expanded to promoting webinars and distributing content onto the partner's website. The latest example is video syndication.



GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI promises to automate and streamline processes across the enterprise, and channel marketing is at the forefront. One of the biggest TCMA challenges is simplifying TCMA usage to drive channel adoption.

Channel partners often carry products from multiple vendors, and learning new channel technology can be daunting. One of artificial intelligence's first challenges is simplifying how an ecosystem partner co-brands and leverages content.

TCMA vendors already leverage Gen AI to help channel partners create, customize, and distribute marketing content. AI-Powered TCMA can generate content tailored to individual partner value propositions in diverse formats, such as press releases, blog posts, website copy, emails, social posts, positioning letters, banner ads, and even customized sales & video scripts.

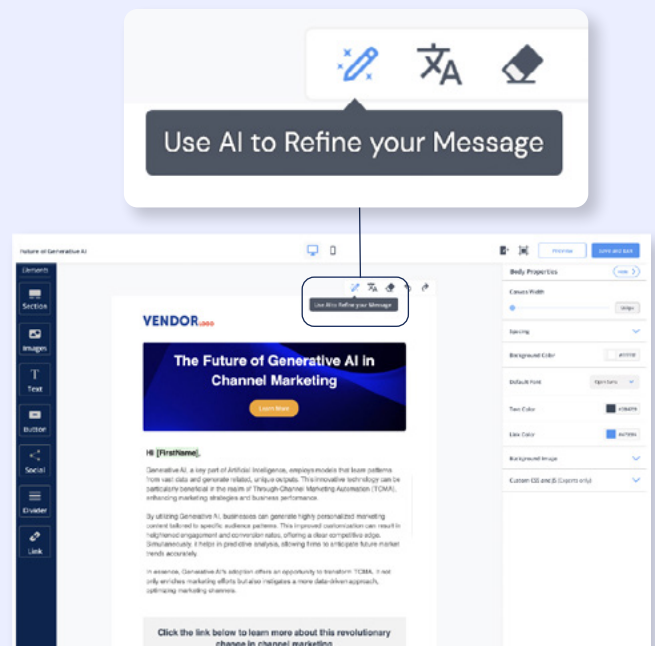
Vendors upload their marketing and product content into the AI-enabled TCMA system, which learns and generates diverse marketing assets. Automating content creation reduces the time and effort required to produce high-quality, tailored marketing materials.

Gen AI significantly reduces the effort of channel partners, and each partner receives personalized content that meets their unique needs and target markets, ensuring a higher level of engagement and relevance.

AI may very well be the secret sauce that unleashes the full potential of through-channel marketing automation.

AI-Driven Content Personalization Modifier

StructuredWeb's ChannelGPT is one example of TCMA infused with the power of Gen AI. It's AI-powered Content Personalization Modifier feature allows users to easily modify existing content, making it more partner and audience specific, to maximize its relevance and impact. The tool focuses on text modification only and leaves design aspects untouched, thereby maintaining the integrity of the original design.



Generate Tailored Content

Let's Refine Your Message

Fill in the needed details below to personalize your content uniquely to your audience.

Industry
Cloud Security

Business Size
Enterprise

Department/Title of Target Recipient
Head of Marketing

Follow up offer/direction for the customer
Register and Receive 25% off first year

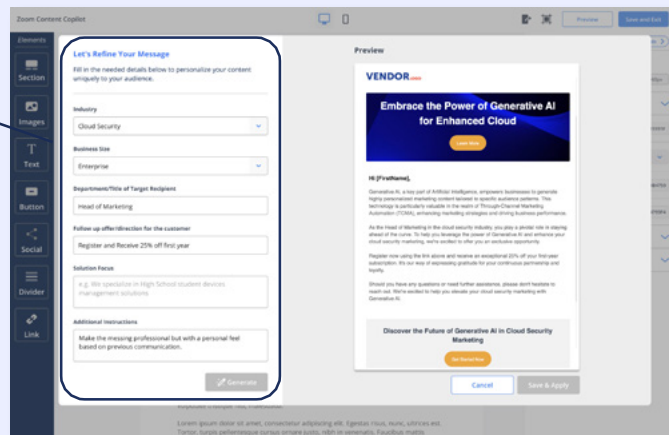
Solution Focus
e.g. We specialize in High School student devices management solutions

Additional Instructions
Make the messaging professional but with a personal feel based on previous communication.

Generate

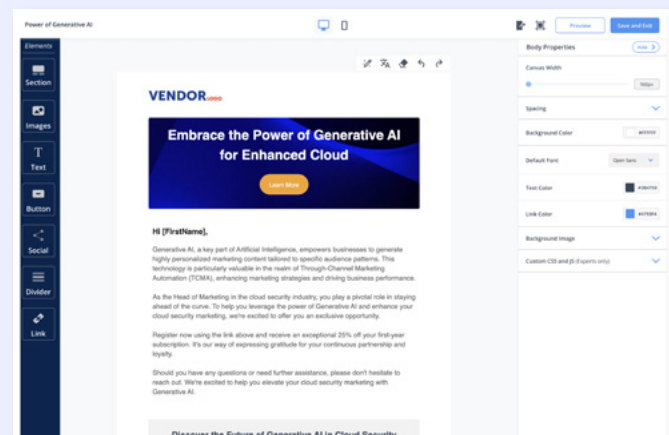
The image on the left illustrates the user interface of the Content Personalization Modifier where users can personalize their marketing materials with the help of Gen AI. The exposed window provides various refinement fields that users fill out to customize their content. These fields can include industry, business size, title of target recipient, follow up message and more.

This ensures that your content speaks directly to the person it's intended for, highlighting your unique value proposition and telling your brand story in a more engaging way.



Simple and Intuitive

StructuredWeb's Content Personalization Modifier works seamlessly with StructuredWeb's intuitive drag and drop editor, focusing solely on text modifications without altering any design features. This is particularly beneficial for non-technical users who want to create multiple variations of their content and scale their efforts efficiently.





Partner Success

As mentioned earlier, partner success must be woven into the core DNA of a TCMA platform for it to be considered a market leader. The TCMA vendor must provide the tools and support to set up the platform, enable the partners, and monitor engagement and success.

COLLABORATION & SUCCESS MEASUREMENTS

A collaboration between a TCMA provider and vendor is essential for ensuring the platform's success. This collaboration is necessary to engage partners, optimize marketing, provide accurate performance monitoring, and create unified channel management.



Collaboration starts with defining success measurements. When rolling out a TCMA platform, there are various ways to measure success. For instance, the time it takes to onboard partners, the channel engagement percentage, or the number of marketing assets utilized. Goals are fundamental when gauging TCMA success.

This collaboration can also help the channel to focus on incentives, utilize powerful PRM (Partner Relationship Management) designed to facilitate communications, and automate tedious customer service tasks and processes.

These possibilities result from a collaboration between the TCMA provider and the vendor and can drive greater channel engagement and more effective utilization of channel marketing.



ENABLEMENT

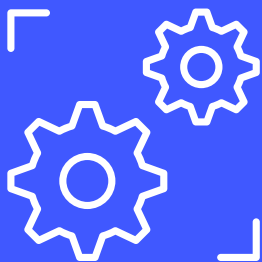
Channel enablement plays a crucial role in ensuring success for TCMA platforms. Beyond simply providing software to field sales and marketing teams, channel enablement furnishes them with the knowledge and tools they need to leverage the platform and achieve results.

Channel enablement also makes it easier for partners to understand analytics that can give a glimpse into how successful their marketing efforts have been.

In short, channel enablement is indispensable for ensuring the success of a TCMA platform.

PREPARING & OPERATIONALIZING CHANNEL MARKETING

Even with market leaders, preparing and operationalizing content can be complex and time-consuming. Operationalizing content includes loading and configuring co-branding, localization, and access control. These functions need to be done for each marketing asset to ensure they function correctly in the system. Some TCMA providers assist with this effort, where others put the burden back on the vendor.



EVANGELIZING & GAINING PARTNER BUY-IN

Evangelizing the TCMA platform is essential for a successful implementation. The platform will only reach its full potential with outreach and partner buy-in. The entire channel management team can be tasked with proactive engagement and marketing to maximize success in deploying this innovative technology

Through constant communication and training, TCMA platforms can increase their chances of success by gaining strong partner buy-in, which will bring value to all stakeholders.

As a result, it is essential to carefully consider these challenges and develop robust processes and procedures around loading content into a TCMA platform. Fully staffing this function is critical to ensure a smooth flow of new marketing into the hands of channel partners. By planning and executing a content strategy, marketers can ensure that their content is loaded correctly and accessible to those who need it.



SUPPORTING THE VENDORS AND PARTNERS

When it comes to success with a TCMA platform having effective support from the provider is essential. With adequate help and guidance, businesses can set up platforms and leverage their capabilities. The provider must also support channel partners in the field, and this is important to ensure engagement and utilization of the platform's features.

Support from the provider typically includes team members who know the platform inside and out and can assist organizations with setup, training users, staying current on updates, and more. Having an experienced team available to provide insights and advice allows companies to take full advantage of the tools they have invested in without any roadblocks occurring during implementation or usage. As such, companies must choose their marketing automation vendors wisely; those who prioritize excellent customer support will undoubtedly lead to better results.



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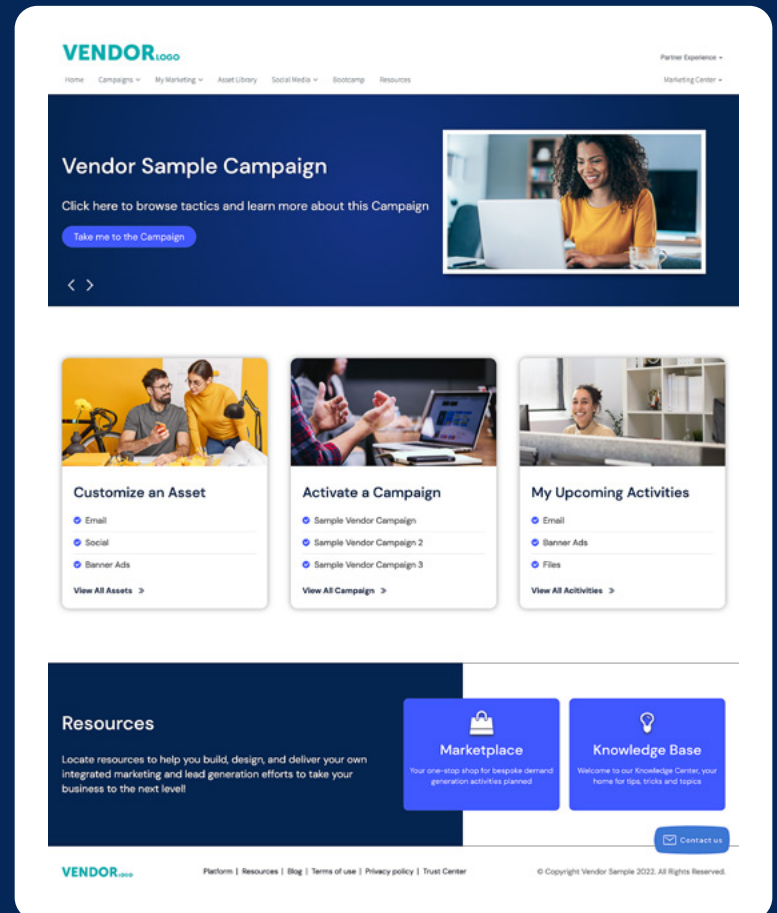
CONCLUSION

The TCMA market is complex, and there are many offerings. Not all of these offerings are the same, so we developed this guide to assist you in differentiating them. Hopefully, you found this guide to offer clear insights into the positioning of each TCMA provider in the market. With this knowledge, it should be easier to see which TCMA platforms are worth the time of your evaluation and which ones to avoid.

StructuredWeb



The most comprehensive channel marketing automation platform



Learn more:

800.339.3711

sales@structuredweb.com

StructuredWeb is the leading enterprise channel marketing automation platform. For more than two decades, StructuredWeb has combined innovative technology with proven go-to-market strategies and world-class services to deliver a faster way to accelerate partner demand generation, strengthen partner engagement and grow channel revenue.

